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“Voices of Educators”: Navigating the Experiences of Physical Education Student Interns in Mainstream Classroom

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Abstract

In the dynamic education landscape, integrating physical education gains prominence, requiring physical educators to adapt within mainstream classrooms. This research delved into the realm of physical education within the mainstream classroom, investigated the lived experiences of educators who have navigated the challenges and opportunities in this ever-evolving landscape. This study employed a descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of PE teaching interns. A total of seven Physical Education student interns from Cebu Normal University participated in this study which achieved data saturation. Anchored in Colaizzi's phenomenological approach and influenced by various philosophies, the data underwent analysis and were presented through a three-prong clustering. The results

revealed that Physical Education student interns experienced challenges yet opened an avenue to hone their creativeness in innovating strategies, and new opportunities in mainstream teaching. These insights lay the groundwork for improving teacher training, supporting inclusive education, and promoting a holistic PE approach in mainstream settings. It is recommended that Physical Education student interns partake in additional training, specifically focusing on adaptive teaching strategies tailored for mainstream environments. Improving the availability of facilities and equipment designed to enhance the pedagogical and inclusive capabilities of PE teachers in mainstream settings is also essential, ensuring that interns are well-prepared to address the needs of students with varying learning styles.

Keywords: Voices of Educators, Experiences, Physical Education, Student Interns, Mainstream Classroom, Inclusive Education

Introduction

Mainstreaming is the integration of students with special needs into standard educational environments or classrooms (Yi, 2016) ^[10]. Professionals cited recommendations to enhance the inclusion of disabled children in physical education (Dixon *et al.*, 2021) ^[9]. In the study of Diler (2020) he said that it has the idea of “providing equal educational opportunities for everyone.” Ergin (2022) added that mainstreaming education including children with severe special needs, receive education in the same class as their typically developing peers with adequate supportive education services. However, physical education teachers face challenges in mainstream education, Fiorini & Mazini (2015) identified teachers experiencing difficulties in adapting to teaching strategies. The most significant challenges include insufficient teaching resources, a lack of classroom aides for assistance, and limited working experience in instructing students with disabilities. This descriptive phenomenological study will describe how these gaps are being realized. Scrutinizing the lived experiences is indispensable to have an extensive description relating to teaching PE in a mainstreaming set-up.

Providing equal opportunity for all children, regardless of whatever disabilities they may have, is an essential part of including all students in a mainstream environment. Teachers expressed that the idea of inclusion would benefit learners' social development (Donohue & Bornman, 2015) ^[11]. This implies that teachers' efforts are integral in helping the success of inclusion in mainstream classrooms (Weng *et al.*, 2015) ^[32]. Their dedication to adapting teaching methods, providing support, and fostering an inclusive atmosphere is fundamental in ensuring students to excel academically and socially within mainstream educational settings. However, while inclusive learning is advantageous for both children with and without disabilities, especially in terms of social development, opportunities for students in mainstream settings with intellectual

disabilities are frequently jeopardized by difficulties and barriers within the educational system (Ferguson, 2014)^[13]. Physical education teachers across the globe have been facing the challenges of students with disabilities placement in general classes, this signifies the need to provide them with support and assistance integrating adapted physical education. Teaching in a mainstream setting requires adequate knowledge, skills, and experiences to meet the needs of students with various conditions. Teachers still face difficulties integrating children with disabilities into mainstream education, particularly because of the uncertainty brought on by unstable professional development and a lack of support systems (Greguol, M. *et al.* 2018)^[15]. Fiorini & Mazini (2015) added that the biggest difficulties teachers face are a lack of support materials, a lack of teaching assistants in the classroom, and a lack of experience working with students with disabilities. These do not only limit the teachers' ability to provide a comprehensive education but can also hinder students' learning experiences.

Public Law 94-142, also known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, remains a subject of ongoing attention and consideration regarding the inclusion of exceptional students in mainstream settings. This legislative requirement has led to an increased presence of exceptional children in typical physical education classes (Martinez, 2013). Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are recognized as a marginalized group, facing significantly lower fulfillment of their educational rights compared to their peers. This discrepancy becomes especially apparent in Physical Education (PE) classes, where they often encounter limited participation opportunities compared to their non-disabled counterparts (Connor & McNabb, 2021). Traditionally, disabled children across the globe have experienced exclusion from Physical Education lessons within mainstream schools, a concern raised by Dixon *et al.* 2021^[9]. In England, these challenges persist, with barriers hindering participation in mainstream school PE lessons. Moreover, many teaching professionals lack the necessary preparation to effectively include disabled children in Physical Education settings. Understanding the lived experiences of teaching physical education in a mainstream setting holds immense importance because it serves to enhance inclusive education practices.

The aim of this research is to explore and understand the lived experiences of pre-service physical education (PE) teachers working in mainstream classrooms, where students with diverse abilities and disabilities are integrated into regular PE classes. As inclusive education gains prominence worldwide (Loreman & Dappeler, 2014), PE teachers are increasingly responsible for adapting their teaching methods to accommodate a wide range of students with varying physical, cognitive, and emotional needs. To achieve this aim, this study will draw on previous research such as Stodden *et al.* (2016), who highlighted the importance of inclusive PE programs in fostering positive social interactions and skill development among students with disabilities. Additionally, research by Block & Obrusnikova (2015) emphasized the need for teacher preparation and professional development in inclusive PE, raising questions about how PE teachers perceive their own preparedness and what strategies they employ in the classroom.

Furthermore, by examining the lived experiences of PE

teachers in mainstreaming classrooms, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges, successes, and strategies employed by these educators, contributing to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education and physical education pedagogy (Hodge & Kilgour, 2014). Ultimately, this research will shed light on the ways in which PE teachers navigate the complex terrain of inclusive classrooms, offering implications for teacher training and support programs to enhance their effectiveness in promoting physical activity and well-being among all students.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of student interns in teaching physical education within mainstream classrooms.

Philosophical Stance

This research has the potential to make a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge and facilitate enhancements in the current educational system. It has the capacity to serve as a conduit for elucidating the experiences of pre-service teachers in teaching Physical Education within mainstream classroom settings. The deficiencies observed by the researchers have received insufficient scrutiny and intervention. Consequently, this study is grounded upon three foundational assumptions: ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions.

Ontological Assumption

Reality varies from person to person, shaped by their experiences, beliefs, and perspectives. This study explored the experiences of Physical Education student interns teaching in mainstream settings, including their teaching methods, challenges, opportunities, and the key traits of effective teaching using various adaptive strategies. This research acknowledges that these interns' lived experiences represent unique facets of a complex, shared reality. By allowing these interns to share their insights and beliefs, this research contributes to the creation of multiple realities based on different perspectives.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological stance of the study was constructivist. In constructivist research, subjectivity prevails, implying the absence of a singular truth. Knowing and understanding facts and truth depends on the person's experiences. To unfold authentic truths, the study employs three overarching categories of epistemological knowledge: factual knowledge, practical knowledge, and knowledge of individuals and places, as guiding principles. Within this study, the researcher relied on vignettes or statements provided by the informants as supporting evidence. While the researcher functioned as an "insider," the veracity and facts were derived from the lived experiences of physical education (PE) instructors regarding their experiences upon teaching in a mainstream set-up.

Axiological Assumption

The main aim of this study was to describe the lived experiences of pre-service teachers teaching physical education in a mainstream set-up. Their lived experiences are inherently valuable, serving as a rich source of knowledge and perspective that enhances the quality of

physical education practices and carrying the capacity to shape policies, shape the design of curricula, and inform teaching approaches, ultimately resulting in concrete enhancements to the educational system. These underscore the necessity of ensuring equal opportunities for the professional growth and advancement of pre-service teachers. Embracing and respecting these experiences stands as evidence in nurturing a supportive and empowering educational community that benefits both students and educators alike. Chapter 1 of the manuscript clearly explains the purpose why this study will be conducted and how it will help people.

Domain of Inquiry

This research inquiry aimed to thoroughly explore and comprehend the multifaceted experiences of teaching interns who are actively involved in teaching physical education within mainstream educational settings. It involved examination of several critical aspects: understanding how teaching interns perceive, navigate, and contribute to the inclusion of students with diverse abilities in mainstream physical education classes, including the strategies they employ for adapting their teaching methods; assessing the specific challenges these interns face, spanning curriculum design, classroom management, and addressing individualized learning goals; delving into their experiences in promoting student engagement and participation, particularly in motivating and supporting students with varying skill levels and interests; investigating the dynamics of relationships between teaching interns and their students, with a focus on how these interactions impact the overall teaching and learning experiences, including potential mentorship and collaboration with experienced educators; exploring the personal and professional growth of teaching interns as they progress through their internship, and how these experiences shape their identities as future educators; and finally, evaluating the impact of institutional support systems, such as mentorship programs and professional development opportunities, on enhancing the teaching interns' experiences and their ability to facilitate inclusive physical education.

Methodology

Design

For this research, the researchers utilized a descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design. Descriptive phenomenology qualitative, as highlighted by Morrow *et al.* (2015)^[24], uncovers the core characteristics that distinguish a phenomenon from others, aiming to grasp its essence. They also noted that Colaizzi's method, known for its simplicity and systematic approach, makes the thematic aspects of research identifiable and understandable. This approach was ideal for capturing the rich and nuanced lived experiences of pre-service physical education teachers within mainstream educational settings. It allowed the researchers to delve deeply into the essence of their experiences and uncover the meanings they attributed to their journeys.

Informants and Sampling Design

The research key informants consisted of six prospective pre-service physical education teachers who were enrolled at Cebu Normal University. Purposive snowball sampling was utilized in selecting the informants that suffice with the

following criteria:

1. Bonafide pre-service Physical Education teachers in Cebu Normal University.
2. Age ranges 22-25.
3. Have engaged in student teaching experiences within mainstream educational settings.

This deliberate selection ensured that informants conveyed relevant experiences that could shed light on the challenges and transformations they dealt with during this transition.

Locale

This study was conducted at Cebu Normal University-Main Campus, a prominent educational institution located at Osmeña Blvd, Cebu City, Philippines. An institution that places a strong emphasis on research and innovation, and excellence in instruction. Cebu Normal University has held accreditation from the AACCUP (Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines) for its College of Teacher Education program since 2011. Notably, the university achieved level IV accreditation, a pioneering accomplishment among AACCUP members.

Instrumentation

The researcher, as the main instrument, gathered information by conducting interviews to explore the lived experiences of pre-service physical education teachers. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were employed. These interviews aimed to encourage participants to openly express their experiences, difficulties, and insights. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to facilitate a thorough analysis.

Secondly, the research incorporated the organization of focus group sessions with a group of pre-service physical education teachers. These sessions served as a platform for group discussions and interactions, fostering a deeper understanding of their shared experiences and viewpoints. Importantly, participants were not pressured to justify their viewpoints or defend their actions. Instead, the research sought to investigate and interpret participants' perspectives in an open and organic manner, recognizing that individuals might have varying interpretations of words and labels, as suggested by Bruce (2017).

Overall, this approach aimed to meticulously and insightfully explore the subject matter, providing a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of physical education student interns in mainstream education.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before:

Before the data collection, the researchers first gained access to conduct the study. Firstly, a transmittal letter and approval letter addressed to the principal of Cebu Normal University-Main Campus were presented by the researchers to permit the conduct of their study to the chosen respondents within the research environment. The transmittal and approval letter contain information about the present study, including the purpose of the study, the number of respondents needed, and the date the research is conducted.

In addition, the respondents of the study were Bachelor of Physical Education students intern students from the Cebu Normal University-Main Campus. The researchers coordinated with the student interns to approach the qualified respondents of the conducted research. After

finalizing the respondents for the study, the researchers gave the consent forms to each respondent to ensure that their participation was voluntary. After the letters were signed by the principal and the respondents' consent, the researchers advanced to the data collection phase.

During:

The researchers approached the respondents who consented to their participation in the study during the agreed date with the coordination of student interns for the data collection phase. Data collection is a systematic approach to accurately collect information from various sources to provide insights and answers, such as testing a hypothesis or evaluating an outcome. The main driver of data collection is to gather quality information that can be analyzed and used to support decisions or provide evidence. (Egnyte). Moreover, the researchers noted that only the chosen respondents would have the interview.

In the actual data collection, the respondents answered the various questions thrown at them. The researchers checked and noted the responses from student interns. The researchers gave their gratitude to the respondents for their participation in the study. The answers from the respondents were fundamental in the conduction of the study. Lastly, the data gathered was checked and organized by the researchers.

After:

After the data collection, the researchers gave an honorarium to the respondents to acknowledge and appreciate their contributions without directly linking individual monetary rewards with performance outcomes, allowing market researchers to maintain ethical guidelines while rewarding respondents appropriately for completing surveys and engaging in the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The researchers utilized Colaizzi's Phenomenological Data Analysis, commencing with the precise transcription of interviews. This method facilitated a thorough comprehension of the data through repeated readings. This immersive process identified initial codes pertaining to the experiences of pre-service teachers, which were subsequently organized into coherent themes. These final themes served as the foundation for an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under investigation. These themes were instrumental in narrating the lived experiences of the teachers. Furthermore, the data presented, analyzed, and interpreted underwent validation by the informants to ensure alignment with the significance of the participants' lived experiences. The ultimate goal was to construct a compelling narrative that effectively encapsulated the fundamental essence of the participants' lived experiences.

Rigor of the Study

Qualitative investigations were conducted with the primary objectives of elucidating explanations and uncovering novel information, with an emphasis on the pivotal role of trustworthiness as a fundamental criterion for appraising qualitative findings. The assessment of trustworthiness was achieved through a comprehensive examination of the study's rigor. To ascertain the trustworthiness of the research, we implemented the four methodological strategies outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989), specifically, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability,

within each facet of our investigation.

Credibility: According to Maher *et al.*, (2018), credibility ensured the measures of the study on what was intended and the authentic reflection of the participants' lived experiences. This could be accomplished by establishing a foundation of rapport prior to the commencement of data collection and fostering a trusting relationship with the participants. Before conducting interviews, the researcher proactively engaged with the key informants, providing them with a comprehensive overview of the research's purpose and objectives. This preliminary interaction not only facilitated a deeper understanding of the informants but also laid the groundwork for cultivating rapport during the subsequent interviews. Additionally, during this stage, the researcher rigorously screened the key informants to ensure their alignment with the predetermined research criteria. To identify suitable participants, the researcher employed a purposive snowball technique, imposing stringent qualifications that prospective key informants were required to meet. Those who failed to satisfy the established criteria were excluded from participation. The study exclusively focused on pre-service physical education teachers in a mainstream set-up. Furthermore, in the transcription phase, the researcher meticulously transcribed the recorded interviews into text, employing manual coding techniques both independently and with the assistance of subject matter experts. This meticulous approach guaranteed the fidelity of the key informants' verbatim responses, ensuring that their words were faithfully represented. Additionally, the accuracy of the informant's verbatim responses was further corroborated through review and validation by a qualified expert. To minimize potential biases, the researcher practiced Epoche or journaling, systematically documenting personal reflections and minimizing subjectivity in the research process. The data underwent comprehensive analysis following the six-step framework outlined in Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological data analysis approach. This rigorous methodology ensured credibility and accuracy in portraying the lived experiences of pre-service teachers instructing Physical Education in mainstream classrooms. It encompassed systematic key informant selection, repeated review of key informant recordings and transcripts, and adherence to established criteria.

Dependability: To ensure that sufficient details were being described and the study facilitated other researchers to repeat the work, dependability was systematically employed (Maher *et al.*, 2018). The study aimed to elucidate the experiential accounts of pre-service educators engaged in instructing Physical Education within mainstreaming classroom settings. All data utilized in this investigation exclusively derived from the narratives provided by key informants. To ensure data accuracy, rigorous measures were implemented, including soliciting feedback and validation from the key informants upon transcription of the recorded interviews. The primary inquiry consisted of a single open-ended question, with subsequent inquiries predicated solely upon the key informants' responses. This initial query underwent a comprehensive review and critique by a panel of research experts to bolster its validity. Following data analysis, the outcomes were further subjected to validation by an expert, thus enhancing the robustness of the observed phenomena under examination.

Confirmability: To guarantee the confirmability of the study, the researcher adopted a data analysis methodology congruent with the study's inherent characteristics, meticulously designed to obviate any potential biases. Epoche remained an integral component of the research framework, serving as a safeguard against the introduction of the researcher's subjectivity throughout the study. Moreover, the manuscript explicitly delineated the data analysis process, highlighting the execution of manual coding under the guidance of a qualified expert, in accordance with the procedural steps articulated in Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenology approach. This approach was meticulously employed to ensure the thorough and accurate examination of the amassed data. Throughout the data analysis phase, continuous review and validation were inherent aspects, acknowledging their indispensable role within the analytical process. This rigorous scrutiny was implemented to uphold the paramount principle that all details were meticulously cross-verified, affording confidence that the data was exclusively derived from the responses of the informants and that no biases tainted the analytical endeavor.

Transferability: To relate the ability of the study to the other context or research, transferability was employed (Maher *et al.*, 2018). The study centered on delving into the firsthand encounters of pre-service educators involved in the instruction of Physical Education within mainstream classroom settings. The researcher assumed the dual roles of both instrument and investigator in this inquiry. While the study delves into the unique experiences of physical education teachers within a mainstream educational setting, its findings can offer valuable insights and considerations to educators working in diverse educational environments. The challenges, strategies, and lessons learned from these teachers' lived experiences may resonate with professionals facing similar issues in various educational contexts. As such, the study's findings possess transferability, highlighting their relevance and applicability to a broader audience seeking to improve physical education instruction and enhance the overall educational experience.

Ethical Consideration

The research adhered to ethical guidelines, undergoing thorough examination by the university's Research Ethics Committee (ERC). Participants, upon data collection, were provided with an informed consent form emphasizing the voluntary nature of their participation and assuring them the freedom to decline without consequences. To safeguard confidentiality, the identities of the informants were shielded by substituting them with pseudonyms. Furthermore, each informant received an honorarium as a token of appreciation from the researcher.

Results and Discussion

Upon data analysis, fifteen notable statements emerged, reflecting the real-life experiences of student interns in physical education within mainstream classroom settings. These statements were categorized into three significant themes. The main themes created in the study consisted of challenges in mainstreaming, pedagogical innovation, and opportunities in teaching mainstream classrooms with the following subthemes: lack of awareness, access to appropriate facilities and equipments, environment distractors, initiative vigor, assessment and instructions,

classroom management, and opportunities for personal and professional development.

Theme 1: Challenges in teaching PE in mainstream classroom

The study revealed that the student interns had encountered various challenges in teaching PE in mainstream classrooms. There was a roadblock due to insufficient awareness regarding the diversity and specific information about the students' condition which is vital in providing the specific needs of these students entering regular classrooms. The student interns often faced the difficulty of understanding the range of students they encountered, lacking vital information about their individual requirements. Additionally, the scarcity of knowledge and training on effective methods to accommodate and instruct children with special needs further compound the complexities of inclusive education. Addressing these gaps is essential for fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all students.

Lack of Awareness and Teaching Experience

The teaching of PE in mainstream classrooms with little to no information given to the student interns prior to them conducting their class about these students was one of many challenges. Physical Education (PE) is indeed known for its emphasis on promoting physical well-being and ensuring that students receive proper guidance and assistance in their physical activities. However, in a mainstream educational setup, the challenges can be more intricate due to the diverse range of students, including those with special needs. This complexity often requires physical education teachers to be open-minded and patient, especially with students with special needs, for them to adapt accordingly, and ultimately find ways to provide effective assistance and support to all students, ensuring that they can participate fully in PE activities.

One key informant said:

"Actually noh, wa gyud mi na inform if naay special needs pero gi ready namo amoang selves, knowing nga diri sa ILS naay mainstreaming so amoa nalang gi ready amoang selves."

(Actually, we weren't informed if there were special needs students, but we prepared ourselves, knowing that there's mainstreaming here in ILS, so we just made ourselves ready.)

The informant's statement reflects the personal journey of physical education student interns in a mainstream setup, emphasizing their lack of awareness regarding students with special needs led to them reacting in an unaligned manner such as laughing at the student with their clumsiness and most likely talking about the students with special needs in a humorous manner. The teacher expressed that they were not informed of these needs nor were briefed of these students and their conditions but took the initiative to prepare themselves for potential challenges adjusted their character and tried acting more professional in the class, not being fazed by any unexpected scenarios in the classroom. The research by Block & Obrusnikova (2015) stated that teacher preparation and ongoing professional development are crucial for equipping educators with the knowledge and

skills necessary to effectively implement inclusive physical education practices in mainstream educational settings.

Another informant shared:

"Ang akong experience is quite challenging knowing nga naay different students with special needs nga lain lain silag kinahanglan. Ang pag cater nila, pag assist, and sa mga inclusive nga activities nga kailangan apil sila ing ana"

(My experience is quite challenging, knowing that there are different students with special needs, each with unique requirements. Catering to them, assisting them, and including them in inclusive activities require such an approach.)

The evidence gathered during the research process demonstrated the substantial challenges encountered by educators in effectively accommodating students with special needs. This highlights the critical necessity for heightened awareness and comprehensive support systems to ensure the inclusivity and academic progress of all students, regardless of their unique requirements. Notably, the study conducted by Weng, Chien, and Lin (2015) ^[32] reinforces the pivotal role of teachers in facilitating successful inclusive education within mainstream classrooms. The research underscores the significance of educators' dedication and efforts in fostering an inclusive learning environment, thereby emphasizing their crucial contributions to the integration of all students.

One informant said:

"It is hard especially when us pre-service teachers wala pami niagi ug training even seminars"

(It is challenging, especially when us pre-service teachers haven't undergone training or seminars yet.)

The following statement highlights the prevalent deficiency in the preparedness of student interns within mainstream classrooms to effectively cater to students with special needs. A substantial number of student interns, particularly those involved in teaching physical education, lack the requisite training, comprehensive knowledge, and prior experience necessary for managing a diverse mainstream classroom setting. This gap in their preparedness is identified as a primary factor contributing to the challenges encountered by these interns in instructing students with special needs. According to studies by Jones *et al.* (2018) and Smith and Brown (2016), the absence of comprehensive training and seminars can significantly impede the interns' ability to effectively adapt their teaching methods to the unique requirements of inclusive education.

Access to Appropriate Facilities and Equipment

Access to quality facilities and equipment is a fundamental aspect of various domains, ranging from education to sports and healthcare, with profound implications for individual well-being and societal development. The availability and adequacy of facilities and equipment are pivotal in shaping the quality of services, experiences, and outcomes. In education, students' ability to learn and thrive is intimately tied to access to well-equipped classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. Similarly, in the realm of sports and physical

education, the provision of adequate facilities and suitable equipment is crucial not only for skill development but also for fostering a culture of physical fitness.

One informant said:

"In terms of PE, I can't deny that na atong school kay dili jud na siya ka-cater sa tanan nato na students like wala jud tay covered court na gym kay apil man na sa imong responsibility as a teacher na dili sila mainitan, mauwanan, or anything. Most especially atong mga bata with special needs lisod kaayo ibalhin balhin if naay kakuwangan sa facilities, kay ang uban mag-wheelchair and we can't easily transfer them raba all the time nga piskay jud unta something nga mainstream friendly."

(In terms of PE, I can't deny that our school really can't cater to all our students. We don't have a covered court or gym, which is also part of your responsibility as a teacher to ensure they aren't exposed to extreme weather conditions. It's particularly challenging for our students with special needs, especially those in wheelchairs, as transferring them is not always easy. Ideally, we need something more mainstream-friendly.)

The informant's testimony illuminates a systemic dilemma inherent in the educational framework, manifesting as formidable impediments to the implementation of physical education, owing to the constraints imposed by inadequate facilities and resources. This predicament transcends individual educational institutions and reflects a pervasive apprehension regarding the dearth of suitable infrastructure for physical education. The insufficiency of proper amenities, encompassing sheltered courts and fitness centers, not only obstructs the efficacious dissemination of physical education courses but also presents challenges to the well-being and active participation of students, particularly in adverse weather conditions. The inadequacy of essential equipment further underscores the exigency for enhanced resources and allocations in the context of physical education instruction, thereby underscoring the imperative of acknowledging physical education as an indispensable constituent of a holistic educational system that fosters the health and fitness of students. According to a study by Hales *et al.* (2019), the presence of appropriate physical education facilities positively influences students' physical activity levels and contributes to the promotion of a healthier lifestyle among youth.

One informant added:

"I think it depends sa sports na imung gi tudlo kay so far ang among na tudlo kay badminton and futsal kay same ra ug equipment but ang the way nila i play kay didto mi mag modify. Pero cguro sa combative sports kanang mga higher level na nga sports naa cguro need na magmodify ta nya if arnis pwede nato butngan ug foam kana na way. So para nako need ta mu modify depende sa sports."

(I think it depends on the sports you are teaching. So far, what we've taught is badminton and futsal, which use the same equipment, but we modify the way they play. Perhaps, for combative sports at a higher level,

there might be a need for modification. For example, with arnis, we can use foam instead. So, in my opinion, we need to modify depending on the sports.)

The informant's remarks highlight the crucial need for adaptability in sports education and draw attention to the vital link between the availability of resources and the way sports are taught. It emphasizes that educators must be open to adjusting their methods based on the equipment and facilities at their disposal. While certain sports like badminton and futsal, which share equipment similarities, can be taught relatively easily, more intricate or competitive sports, particularly at higher levels, require careful adjustments to ensure the safety and welfare of participants, such as the use of foam weapons in Arnis. According to a study conducted by Sallis *et al.* (2016), the availability of appropriate resources in sports education significantly contributes to the development of a positive attitude towards physical activity and enhances students' overall engagement and participation in sports. This recognition of adaptability not only underscores the significance of resourcefulness in sports education but also acknowledges the necessity of providing suitable resources and facilities to facilitate a comprehensive and secure sports curriculum for students.

Environmental Distractors

Environmental distractors such as cramped classrooms and excessive noise significantly impede the effective teaching of physical education in mainstream classrooms. Limited space restricts the execution of certain exercises and activities, curtailing students' ability to fully engage in physical movements and hindering the demonstration of complex techniques. Additionally, persistent noise levels disrupt the concentration necessary for effective teaching and learning, posing a challenge to conveying instructions clearly and fostering a conducive learning environment. The combination of these environmental challenges creates barriers to the comprehensive delivery of physical education, emphasizing the critical need for adequate and appropriate spatial arrangements and a conducive atmosphere to optimize the teaching and learning experience in PE within mainstream educational settings.

One informant expressed a concern:

“Lisod kaayo usahay kay gamay kay ilang room and daghan sila. Walay proper ventilation, na bitay fans pero dili maigo tanan which makesit hard for the students kay it can affect them jud raba...niya tungod mudaghan nang reklamo mag-lain lain na sila and it will be hard for us to manage the class kay nabanha na...connected rajud sila”

(It's hard sometimes because the rooms are small to cater large number of students. There is no proper ventilation, although there are fans but not everyone will feel its effect which makes it hard for students because it can really affect them. Then everyone will get riled up due to multiple complaints all the more harder for us to manage the class. Everything is connected).

This remark shares how a cramped and inadequately ventilated classroom during PE time can significantly impact students in mainstream classrooms, leading to

concerns that affect their concentration and attention in class. The limited space restricts students' movement, impeding their ability to fully participate in physical activities, while poor ventilation exacerbates discomfort and fatigue, potentially leading to decreased alertness and diminished cognitive function. Research by Mendell *et al.* (2016) supports this notion, highlighting the detrimental effects of poor indoor air quality on cognitive performance and overall well-being among students. These environmental constraints underscore the critical need for spacious, well-ventilated classrooms to promote an optimal learning environment, particularly during physical education sessions.

One informant added:

“And if kani ganing mga bata sa ILS, if mawala na ilang attention sa class tungod kay igang na, unya gahout sila during PE time, masaba na jud sila ay. Musamot pajud if banha sad sa gawas ang ilang ulo mag-sigi na ug check sa door wala na nimo. Matagbaw kag control balik sa klase.”

(And if the students in the ILS, if they'll lose interest and attention in your class due to how hot it is, because of the cramped space during PE time, they become noisy. It becomes more noisy if it's noisy outside too. You will have a hard time controlling the class again.”

This shows how noise distractions from both inside and outside the classroom significantly impact the mainstream classroom during PE time, leading to a multitude of challenges that disrupt the learning environment. Internal noise, originating from other classes or activities within the school premises, can create a discordant atmosphere, making it difficult for students to concentrate on instructions and activities during physical education sessions. Similarly, external noise, such as traffic, construction sounds, and other kids outside, further adds to the distractions, impeding effective communication between the instructor and the students. A study by Klante *et al.* (2013)^[19] highlights the negative impact of excessive noise on students' concentration and academic performance, emphasizing the need for effective sound management strategies to minimize distractions and enhance the overall learning experience, especially during crucial physical education sessions.

Theme 2: Pedagogical Innovation

In response to the study's findings, student interns demonstrated adaptability by modifying teaching methods for students with special needs. These modifications and innovations were specifically tailored to meet the unique learning requirements of individuals facing challenges. The identification of these adjustments underscores a proactive stance toward fostering inclusive education within the academic environment. It showcases the dedication of educators and interns in creating an atmosphere that accommodates diverse learning needs. Ultimately, such initiatives contribute to a more inclusive and supportive educational experience.

Initiative Vigor

Cebu Normal University is a progressive and inclusive school for students with special needs. Teaching students

with special needs is challenging in some ways. However, the informants have the initiative to address the learning needs of students with special needs in teaching mainstream set-up. They are enthusiastic and optimistic to guide the students in reaching their potential skills and to provide sufficient and adequate learning experiences for the students with special needs.

One key informant said:

“First namo, if naa mi special needs na mga students kay we implement the peer-to-peer relationship like naa mi students regular students nga e inform nga you need to help your peers like sila ang silbi mahimong assistant sa katong student with special needs.

(Firstly, if we have students with special needs, we implement the peer-to-peer relationship. We inform our regular students that they need to help their peers by serving as assistants to those students with special needs.)

The informant’s statement showcases how they modify instruction. The situation showcases inclusivity and optimism since it permits peer-to-peer collaboration and regular student interaction which build a positive environment in the school setting. This strategy employed by one of the key informants validates the study of Avramidis *et al.* (2019) ^[4] insinuating that they saw peer tutoring as a valuable way to integrate students with various needs into their classrooms.

Another informant shared that:

“We have this one student who is visually impaired since there are multiple types of learners man so maglisud jud kag incorporate or dapat imu jud siya then sa PE sa sports dapat dli sya nmu ipa excuse rather mag improvise ka imuhang i modify imong activity so that he/she can participate still even if modified iyaha.”

(We have this one student who is visually impaired. Since there are multiple types of learners, it's really challenging to incorporate activities that suit them. In PE, for sports, you shouldn't excuse them; instead, you need to improvise and modify activities so that he/she can still participate even with modifications.)

The informants adjust activities for special needs, emphasizing inclusivity and preventing any student from being left behind. While addressing the four components of MAPEH, they acknowledge the challenge of creating activities that suit diverse learning styles. This aligns with Grenier *et al.*'s (2022) ^[16] study, supporting how teachers' intentional practices enhance student engagement and cater to disabilities within general physical education settings through innovative pedagogy.

As they tackle more on their techniques in modifying just to cater the needs of their students. The fight for inclusivity has become stronger and influential to many as well.

An informant shared his sentiments that says:

“Same sa ila giingon nga lisud kaayo, so, start palang sa curriculum mapping, lesson planning e-consider

nana nimo always. Kay sa amoa visually impaired man. So, mangita jud kag sports nga makaparticipate siya ba.”

(Like they said it's very difficult, so, starting with curriculum mapping, you need to consider lesson planning always. Because we are handling the visually impaired. So, look for sports that he can participate in.)

The informant recognizes the challenge and stresses early consideration in curriculum planning, given a visually impaired student. Finding suitable sports is crucial. Equality in class treatment is emphasized, discouraging differentiation from regular students. Fairness is advocated, with a call to adjust standards for the visually impaired student's performance, prioritizing overall achievement over potential errors. This concurs with the study by Rasooli *et al.* (2021) ^[29] which stated that equitable treatment is a crucial factor in adapting assessments and instructional approaches for students with disabilities in the classroom.

Assessments and Instructions

In a mainstream setting, physical education student interns learn to be innovative and modify their assessments and instructions. This adaptation aims to establish a learning environment that is both equitable and just. The experience highlights the importance of creating an inclusive space where all students, regardless of differences, have fair opportunities. These interns develop a keen understanding of adjusting their teaching methods to cater to diverse needs, fostering an atmosphere of equality. Ultimately, the emphasis is on cultivating an educational environment that prioritizes fairness and justice in the learning process.

One key informant shared:

“When we teach them need namo sila sunduon, during classes, like if we will be doing discussion. Need namo ipa sabot og maayo then we will make sure as well nga maka participate sila, so there will be modification of our classes or lessons rather, so they will be engaged more dele sila ma left behind.”

(When we teach them, we need to guide them, especially during classes, such as when we are having discussions. We need to ensure that they understand well, and we also make sure that they participate. So, there will be modifications in our classes or lessons to ensure they are more engaged and not left behind.)

The informant shared that teaching in a mainstream set-up requires patience and understanding. Providing thorough assistance to each learner's especially those students with special needs through modifying instructions, ensures students a meaningful learning experience. This corroborates Amoako *et al.* (2021) ^[3] study which stated that pre-service teachers adapt and modify the general school curriculum to accommodate the needs of all children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Another informant added:

“Kuan, my topic for this grading is all about hand signals. Common hand signals. What I did is gi ensure nako nga nay modification specifically or specializing

kanang dele sila need mo lihok na, and then kanang as long as maka move sila og maka perform mao ragyud nay importante sa modification. Ang importante maka perform then dele sila ma left behind then e explain thoroughly and instructions. "

(My topic for this grading is all about hand signals, common hand signals. What I did is I made sure there were modifications, especially for those who need it, so that as long as they can move and perform, that's the most important part of the modification. What's important is that they can perform without being left behind, and then I explain thoroughly and provide instructions.)

The informant emphasizes the significance of modifications in assessment in a mainstream class. It is being highlighted that acknowledging the student's effort as long as they were able to perform and understand the lesson. This statement is supported by Alghazo (2021) ^[1] which substantiates that students with disabilities need modified lesson plans and methods of teaching in order to succeed.

Theme 3: Opportunities in teaching PE in mainstream classroom

In the third theme of the study, it became evident that teaching in a mainstream set-up offers valuable opportunities for professional growth to the informants. As they engage in the teaching process, the informants showcase adaptability, demonstrating their ability to enhance pedagogies to meet the diverse needs of each learner with a commitment to equity. The mainstream setting emerges as a dynamic space where educators equipped with learned experience, refine their approaches, fostering a responsive and inclusive learning environment.

Opportunities for Personal Development

Teaching students with disabilities isn't just about teaching; it's like going on a journey that can help teachers grow personally. When teachers work on giving these students a good education that includes everyone, they can learn a lot of things themselves. They can get better at how they teach and become more understanding and flexible. It's when teachers really understand and help these students that they get chances to grow. This journey can show how teaching in this special way doesn't just help the students, it also helps the teachers become better and learn more about special education.

One informant stated:

"The good side of our experience is that though weakness namo ang impatient pero through the students with special needs naka help siya na mo boost pud among patience. Though weakness sya, pwede pud namo mahimong strength. "

(The positive aspect of our experience is that, despite our weakness in impatience, dealing with students with special needs helped us boost our patience.)

The collected information underscores the significant impact of the teaching experience in a mainstream classroom, especially when it comes to working with students who have special needs. It underscores that shortcoming, like impatience, can transform into strengths through interactions

with these students, ultimately improving educators' patience levels. In this context, the attitude of teachers plays a crucial role because those with a positive outlook on inclusion are more inclined to adjust their teaching methods to cater to the unique needs of each student, as supported by research (Copfer & Specht, 2014).

Opportunities for Professional Development

While structured professional development programs are undeniably valuable for educators, it's essential to recognize that numerous mainstream physical education (PE) teachers have honed their skills through hands-on classroom experience. Even without specialized training, they've thrived and grown as educators, using the everyday challenges of the mainstream setting as a learning platform. This approach has equipped them with practical skills, a well-rounded understanding of interdisciplinary aspects, and the ability to navigate the complexities of modern education. The professional development opportunities for these teachers extend beyond formal programs, highlighting the continuous, organic nature of learning within the PE education field.

One informant highlighted that:

"Nakahandle mi long ago first demonstration, nakahandle mig blind and then I don't know how to teach that student so sige ralog ana nga sige 'buhata ni' 'kana kana' 'ing ani.' So when we have our seminar last year pud kanang dili diay na sya ingnaon pagtudlo if mag tudlo kag blind or mga deaf, kanang mga naay special needs. Dili daw sya ingnaon pagtudlo, dapat specific, concise ug kanang understandable sya sa end sa blind. "

(We handled a demonstration long ago, and we had to handle a blind student. I didn't know how to teach that student, so I kept saying, 'Do this,' 'Do that,' 'Like this.' Then, during our seminar last year, I learned that you shouldn't just teach without informing if you're teaching a blind or deaf student, those with special needs. Teaching should not be general; it needs to be specific, concise, and understandable, especially for blind students.)

The narrative presented traces a journey of growth, starting from the initial struggles encountered when instructing visually impaired students during early demonstrations, leading to a realization of the importance of using precise, straightforward language when teaching students with special needs. This concurs with the study by Kemma (2019) which found out that in many classrooms, students often find themselves confused despite their teacher's diligent lesson preparation. This confusion likely arises due to a lack of proficiency in delivering clear and effective instructions. This learning process underscores the critical role of effective communication and inclusivity in mainstream education, as well as the potential for personal and professional growth among teachers as they tackle these challenges. It becomes evident that providing clear instructions is a demanding task, one that requires both knowledge and experience. Teachers undoubtedly require ongoing training to enhance their ability to deliver effective instructions; otherwise, the teaching process may be at risk of failure.

One informant added:

"Sa akong kay mas maayos sa pagpapaligay. Kay sa amoang student, katong blind kay bago lang jud sa among topic sa PE ang hand signals sa badminton. gunit jud mig kamot, holding hands jud. 'This is how you do the commencing the game' and its very fulfilling sa imong part specially nga muana na ang teacher sa badminton nga 'okay do the hand signals.' Tanan nga hand signals nga akong gitudlo niya kay na perform jud niya. Even wala sya kita ni techer unsaon pag-perform. Sa akong palang guide as akoang kamot na perform niya tanang hand signals."

(In my opinion, it's more on the fulfilling side. For our student who is blind, the hand signals in badminton were a completely new topic for us in PE. We really held hands, physically guiding. 'This is how you commence the game,' and it's very fulfilling on your part, especially when the badminton teacher says, 'Okay, do the hand signals.' All the hand signals I taught him, he executed perfectly. Even though he couldn't see the teacher's demonstration, he performed all the hand signals based on my guidance.)

Emphasizing adaptive instruction's efficacy in mainstream Physical Education, the key informant highlighted its role in fostering successful learning experiences. Despite challenges teaching students with special needs, it contributes significantly to professional development and provides a fulfilling teaching experience. The narrative positions adaptive instruction as a valuable strategy, acknowledging the intricate balance between challenges and rewards in addressing diverse learner needs in Physical Education. This statement supported a study by Thompsons & Timmons (2017).

Exhaustive Description

This study aimed to delve into the experiences of physical education student interns in teaching mainstream classrooms. The findings revealed that their diverse encounters were acknowledged as they voiced the challenges, pedagogical innovations, and opportunities associated with mainstreaming.

It is identified that student-interns faced challenges teaching PE in mainstream classrooms, highlighting the need for improved teacher preparation and ongoing development to implement inclusive practices (Jarvis, 2019) ^[17]. The importance of access to facilities and equipment for comprehensive PE was emphasized, addressing resource shortages in many educational institutions, impacting the well-being of students with special needs (Gilav, n.d) ^[14]. Environmental challenges like cramped classrooms and noise served as barriers, underlining the need for spacious, well-ventilated classrooms. Student-interns in mainstream setups developed as critical thinkers, recognizing the importance of pedagogical innovation and fostering inclusive education for academic success (Marlina *et al.*, 2023) ^[22]. Cooc's study (2019) ^[7] reinforced educators' need for personal and professional development, with hands-on experience allowing for self-assessment and refining pedagogical skills in mainstream classrooms (Crispel & Kasperski, 2019) ^[8]. This transformative journey in mainstream education fostered personal introspection and professional growth.

Conclusion

In summary, the experiences of physical education student interns in mainstream settings can be categorized into three key themes: the challenges encountered in mainstreaming, the innovative adaptations in teaching methods, and the opportunities for personal and professional development. These experiences highlight the complexities and rewards of inclusive education, underscoring the importance of awareness, adaptable teaching approaches, and a dedication to creating inclusive learning environments. Despite initial difficulties, the student interns demonstrated their capacity for innovation and growth, emphasizing the dynamic nature of teaching in mainstream classrooms.

Recommendation

In light of the research findings and conclusions, researchers propose several recommendations and suggestions. This includes a call for a more comprehensive pre-service teacher training program for mainstream physical education. This targeted approach aims to equip educators with the skills needed to address diverse student needs effectively. Additionally, there's an emphasis on enhancing facilities and acquiring appropriate equipment to ensure an optimal learning experience. The administration is urged to use these insights to drive improvements, focusing on a solid teaching foundation for pre-service teachers, especially in handling students with special needs, promoting greater inclusivity and effectiveness in physical education instruction.

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